

W E E K L Y



April 2017

The magazine for women.

Hindu spring
festivals
offer many
colors, flavors
and symbols

Local priest
practicing hope
rather than
hate

LDS spring
represents new
beginnings

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The magazine for women.

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There are two, maybe three things, 'you don't talk about' at parties or get-togethers. One of those things is religion. I think it is because, in many ways, we are set in what we believe. In most cases, we were raised to have faith and practice a certain religion. As we grow up and experience different parts of our own community, travel the world, and experience cultures different from our own, we are introduced to other religions and religious practices.

Many religions may agree on one thing, but view it in different ways. In editing this issue, I have come to the conclusion that spring brings similar celebrations and happiness to each religion. Spring in itself is a time of rebirth, new growth, new sun (warmer sun!).

I grew up in a Methodist family. I don't attend a local Ames church, partly because there is no replicating the church family I grew up in. Springtime is a big deal for Christians, as it is for many other religions.

I can remember one year when I was tiny, we decorated Easter eggs at my grandparents' farm. After eggs were done, it was my job to guard the fridge so the Easter Bunny didn't steal them. But, I was 6 or 7, shiny things distracted me. Grandpa told me to check the fridge — the eggs were gone! And then we followed with tradition and hunted them down.

Another fond memory is Palm Sunday. Our church bought palm branches and we processed our way down the aisle up to the altar, all while waving our amazing leafy branches.

Besides all the Easter Bunny and palm waving memories, Easter was a special time growing up.

Easter has its own kind of magic.

There was this guy who hung out with the least of us — the sick, the poor, the weak, the outcast in society's eyes. He was crucified, and then days later came back to life! But not to stay on Earth. He died for our sins. Our sins against the sick, the poor, the weak, the outcasts and everyone else. He may have been the greatest there ever was. He may have been crazy by our standards today. But one thing is for sure: he was kind. He was thankful. He gave unconditional love.

How many of us can say we do that, give unconditional love? Spring is a time for new beginnings. At the moment, and for the past many moments there has been a constant spew of hate directed at the people we disagree with. There are people claiming to be Christian, but in the next breath saying, 'I don't like the color of your skin so you must be less than me.' Or 'You are attracted to the wrong person, you are less than me.' There is no unconditional love in those thoughts. Let's hit the reset button, and remember that crazy, cool guy who gave his life for our sins. That doesn't mean you are allowed to do and say whatever makes YOU feel good. It means you should be thankful for what you have and help your neighbor, I don't care if he is purple with yellow and red polka-dots and has a mohawk, he is your neighbor. And as a Christian, your main man told you to love thy neighbor.

I can't say what the readings and stories say for other religions, but that is one that holds true throughout: love your neighbors, love your village. No exceptions.

On the cover: Neha Mehrota. Photo by Ronna Lawless

FACETS

FACETS • Table of contents

women and their faith

- 6 Planting that seed
Springtime on the farm
- 8 Interwoven
A mindful reflection upon the spirituality of the American Indian
- 12 Hope over hate
Local priest urges community to practice hoe rather than hate
- 13 Exploring religion
Shifu Hongyang's path from the church to the Buddhist temple
- 18 Hindu spring festivals offer many colors, flavors and symbols
Neha Mehrota is raising her children to know their Hindu roots
- 21 LDS spring represents new beginnings
Easter acts as a reminder of what Jesus Christ did for people
- 22 Pagans and Wiccans
Spring is a time of birth and balance
- 24 Where did religion come from
A scientist's new theory: Religion was key to humans' social evolution

savor

- 26 Sometimes, it's okay to 'dirty up' your clean eating
- 27 This spice blend is everything. And it's leaving its bagel origins behind
- 28 Test Kitchen recipe
Chicken Mrabella

nutrition

- 29 5 habits you need to know to improve your metabolism
How to make Honey turmeric chicken

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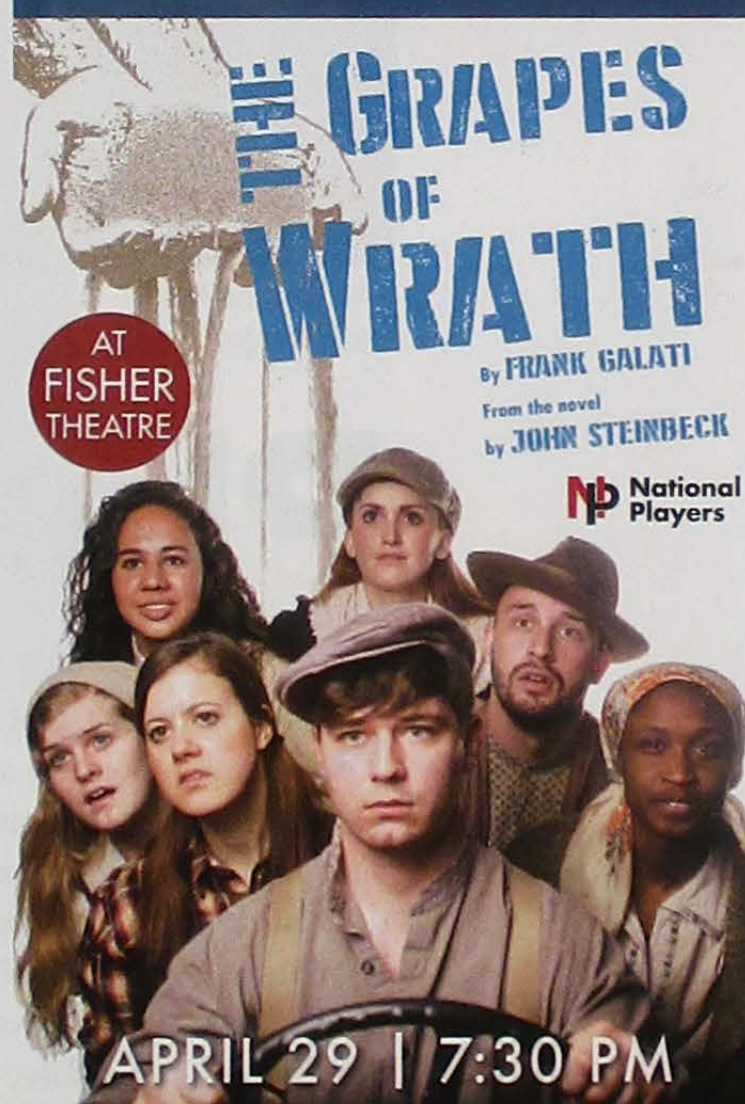
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Women and their faith



BY KAREN
SCHWALLER
Contributing
Writer



Photo by Karen Schwaller/Contributing Writer

Planting that seed

Springtime on the farm. It should give us visions of tulips blooming and blowing in the breeze, fresh air, clothes drying on the line, children playing in the yard and tractors humming in fields in the distance as they work ground and plant the crop.

What it often does show us is ankle-deep mud, a mud room that suggests people might want to wipe their feet before they go outside, four-legged mothers and babies in the barn that need our attention, ferociously-stinky barn clothes, and the sound of metal-on-metal pounding and profanities coming from the machine shed as equipment is readied for spring planting.

We begin to see things we haven't seen in a long time ... sunlight past 5 p.m., temperatures that begin without a "minus" sign, babies in the barns, insulated coveralls hanging on basement hooks instead of on people, and pickup trucks parked in groups in front of the shop as farmers gather together to collaborate and compare stories.

Farmers have many business partners. A dream is taken to the banker, who can single-handedly determine if the farmer should proceed with it or put together a resume.

Once the dream is approved by the money gods, then there are many others to place on the team every year — including seed and chemical sales people, agronomists, equipment/implement dealers, repair shops and tire shops, auto parts stores, steel salespeople, livestock sales people, livestock sale barn managers, veterinarians, building companies, fuel delivery people, feed supply dealers and of course, the tax preparer, who can help you remember that they didn't make any money this year.

But even with all the people it takes to help a farmer do what he or she does every year, there is one partner who goes almost unnoticed by most. That partner is as important as the dream is, yet He is content to remain a silent partner — providing the most basic necessities a farmer needs to give back from the earth.

Women and their faith



Photos
by Karen
Schwaller/Con-
tributing Writer

A farmer can only do “so much” to grow a crop. But if the rains never came and there was no soil in which to plant a crop and no sunshine to make plants grow, the farmer’s hands would be tied.

I am reminded of the story of an arrogant man who once argued with God, saying he could do anything God could do. God asked him if he could make a tree, and the man responded that he could indeed make a tree. So he took a seed and scooped up some dirt, when God stopped him and said, “Wait a minute — make your own dirt.”

This spring we had a couple of urban youth come out to our farm to bottle feed some lambs. What they experienced was new life — a baby lamb being born — with no edits.

Their hands covered their eyes now and then as they watched, and comments of, “Ouch ...” and “... that must hurt ...” along with their saucer-like eyes were all it took to remember that new life — even out in the barn — is always miraculous, no matter how old you are, and no matter how many times you’ve seen it.

God uses farmers — only about 1 percent of His people — to do His work on earth. God made the whole world dependent upon that 1 percent of the population to give them all they need to live — food, fuel and fiber.

The farmer is one who works directly with God to make a living each year. He has to.

In that comparatively smaller way, a farmer understands the pressures God faces. The world depends on the farmer to sustain life, and they depend on God for the same thing.

To plant a seed is to have hope. And to harvest it, well, is nothing short of a miracle.



BY JANE
DEGENEFFE
Contributing
Writer

INTERWOVEN

A mindful reflection upon the spirituality of the American Indian

*'There are birds of many colors — red, blue, green, yellow — yet, it is all one bird.
There are horses of many colors — brown, black, yellow, white — while it is all one
horse. So cattle... so all living things — animals, flowers, trees.*

*So men: in this land where once were only Indians are now men of every color —
white, black, yellow, red — yet all one people. That this should come to pass was in
the heart of the Great Mystery. It is right thus.*

*And everywhere there shall be peace."
— Hiamove*

In reflecting upon this interview with Jen McClung, I realized that there are many spiritual beliefs of the Native Americans that I personally hold dear. I love the diversity observed within this excerpt she shared with me from Vine Deloria Jr.'s chapter entitled, *Kinship With the World*:

"Indians do not talk about nature as some kind of concept or something 'out there.' They talk about the immediate environment in which they live. They do not embrace all trees or love all rivers and mountains. What is important is the relationship you have with a particular tree or a particular mountain. You can find an extremely intimate connection between the lifestyle, and sometimes the political organizations of Indian tribes and the land in which they live. The religion of the tribes that live in the woodland area, either the Pacific Northwest or the East, is greatly concerned with dreams and psychoanalysis. If you go to the plains or the Southwest, you have either ceremonial years or very stark vision quests."

As a Christian, the faith I embrace is not so much the traditions of the varied denominations, but rather the core theology of Christ Jesus. In

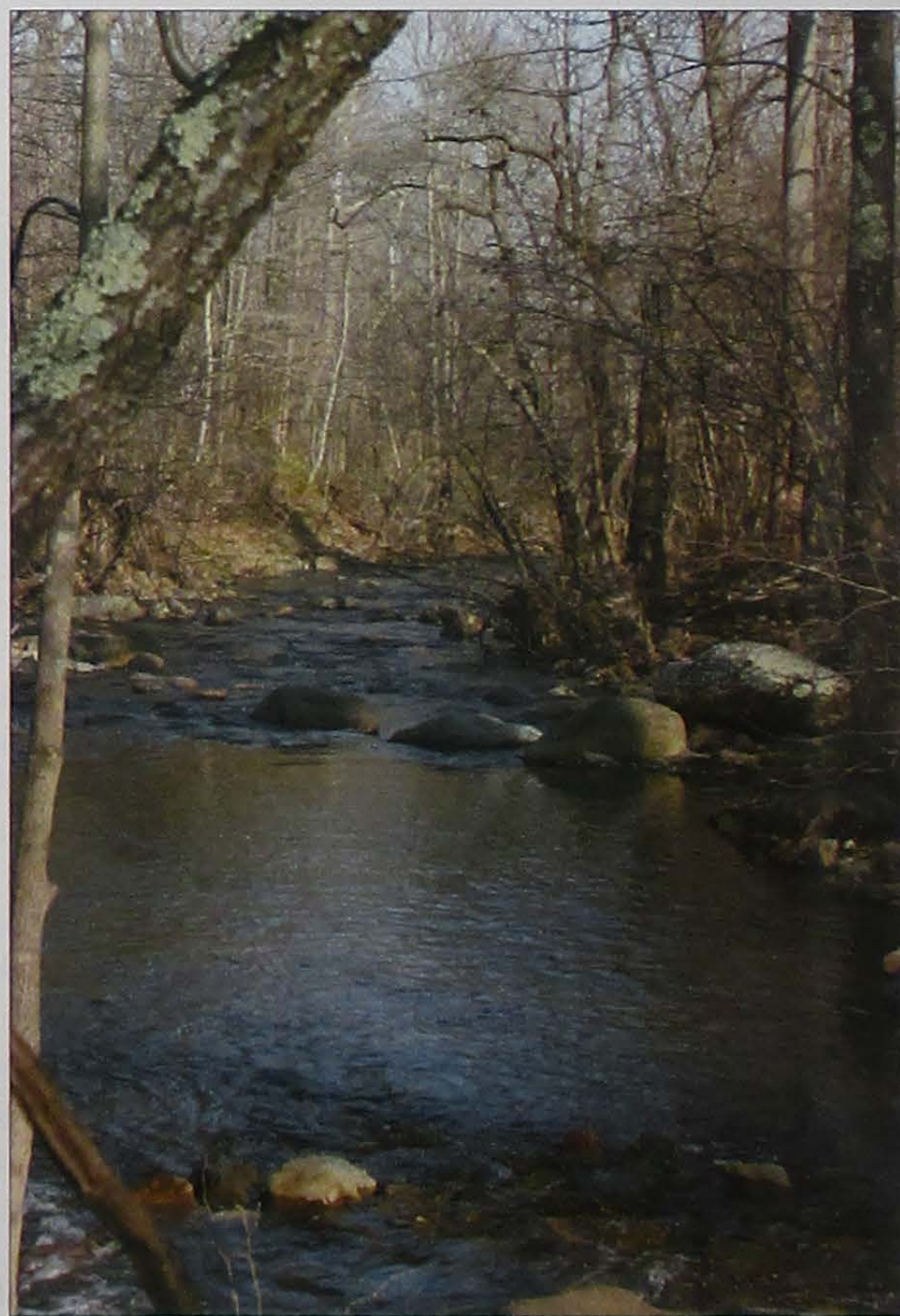


Photo by Jane Degeneffe/Contributing Writer

Women and their faith

reviewing my interview with Jen I see that Native Americans also, uphold the same respect for God's creation in which I've recognized in both Old and New Testament scripture. This resonating, heartfelt appreciation for the beauty and interlink between people, planet, and God is what is similar to my own faith. Jen McClung, a lecturer for Iowa State University, speaks into my questions on Native American beliefs, and allows us to venture spiritually further into the history of the Native American Nation.

FACETS:

Is there a way that any specific tribe, or all of them as a whole, can unite to form alliances with each other? Does there surface a belief that looks outside of that culture and transcend to unite women and people within different spheres of belief?

JEN MCCLUNG:

"There are many existing



Jen McClung is a lecturer in American Indian Studies at ISU. *Contributed photo*

alliances. Check out CERT, or the Indigenous Environmental Network; or the Idle No More Movement. There are many, many alliances. There are also many, many disagreements – as with any diverse population. As for beliefs that transcend culture to unite women, there is a Cheyenne saying: 'A nation is not conquered until the hearts of its women are on the ground. Then it is finished, no matter how brave its warriors or strong their weapons.' Pretty

'universally, indigenous women are respected as life-givers. As part of that responsibility, women are often tasked with caring for the waters. We definitely saw that at Standing Rock. Women led the water ceremonies.'

FACETS:

How can the Native American belief system help modern American women to feel and become valued as well as united in this country at this present age?

MCCLUNG:

"The Lakota have a saying – mitakuye oyasin, which generally translates to all my relations and acknowledges that we are all relatives, both human and non-human. Many indigenous nations hold this belief as well, though it might be expressed differently from tribe to tribe. But the idea of interconnect-edness is fundamental to indigenous

INTERWOVEN, page 11



Photo by Jane Degeneffe/Contributing Writer



Photo by Jane Degeneffe/Contributing Writer

INTERWOVEN continued from page 9

philosophies. That idea alone would help all of us to shift our mindset away from our values of consumption and individualism to a more community-centered perspective thereby inherently uniting women and helping them to feel more valued."

FACETS:

Is there a Native American spirituality practice that can help to bring healing and support for women who are feeling disabled, enabled, or otherwise helpless? Are there meditations or books of poetry that you recommend?

MCCLUNG:

"One must be very careful in borrowing practices from other cultures. Generally speaking, ceremonies or practices must be given to you or taught to you by someone in that culture. It is a matter of authority and respect. Without proper handling and respect for protocols, you can be inviting very real danger into a person or space if you don't know what you're doing. That said, the practice of smudging (burning sage or cedar) is pretty commonly used as a cleansing act and is widely used by native and non-native people. Still, it's best to have someone who knows what they're doing teach you the practice."

FACETS:

How do you personalize the Indian beliefs? What is meaningful to you and why?

MCCLUNG:

"I try not to personalize Indian beliefs. I am not Indian. I have learned many, many lessons from native people, but I don't imagine that those are my beliefs. I recognize that I learned this teaching from an Ojibwe grandmother, or that teaching from Lakota man, or this story from a Navajo grandfather, or that story from a Cheyenne elder. It's important to give proper credit and to know whose teaching you're drawing from.

Some of the more powerful teachings that have stuck with me, I suppose, would be lessons about interconnect-edness, about how time is circular rather than linear, that the world is made of stories, that sacred places hold power and are not arbitrary (like how we build churches wherever is most convenient for us). I also have come to understand and value that the non-human world is in constant communication with us, is always speaking. We mostly don't know how to listen."

FACETS:

Are there any spiritual benefits in going to a Powwow?

What are the names of local tribes who allow for outsiders to observe or participate in a Powwow?

MCCLUNG:

"Contemporary powwows are generally considered a social thing, although some people have spiritual experiences at powwows. The drumming can be especially powerful in shifting your state of mind. The University of Iowa has a powwow every year; the Meskwaki have an annual powwow too, I believe. Most powwows are open to the public and are a great chance for non-native people to learn from and get to know native people. A quick search on the web for pow wows will lead you to websites that list when and where powwows are happening."

FACETS:

In regard to agriculture and respect for the earth, how do Native Americans perceive our responsibility? In light of the day to day typical world of work/home/faith/play that we live in, are there any resources to help us better understand and value Native Americans who give us a longing to do better things for our environment and to respect nature?

MCCLUNG:

"Different tribes articulate that relationship in different ways, but it comes back to that idea of interconnect-edness. You're not going to harm or damage your grandmother or your mother or your father, right? They provide for you, they help you. Your existence depends on them.

I want to be careful here, too, and not simplify native philosophies into one that translates into "all Indians love nature". That's a stereotype that can be damaging. As Deloria's article points out, Indians have relationships with specific landscapes — the places they are from. Not all Natives have always acted in ways that protect or sustain their environments. Modern realities mean tribes have to face economics decisions about resource management — do we develop oil drilling on our lands, do we lease land for uranium mining? The Red Lake Band of Chippewa overfished their waters to the point that the walleye population was destroyed and their tribal economy (and therefore their people) suffered greatly. It took many years and collaboration with state and local agencies to bring back the population. Like all peoples, Indians aren't perfect and are constantly fighting unique struggles between maintaining traditions and old ways and pragmatically dealing with modern realities."

Interwoven lives are reflected here. The volitional beliefs of our Native American land can be respected and upheld if we permit them to be. So much of what we see as beautiful can still be retained.

BY EILEEN
GEBBIE
Contributing
Writer

Local priest urges community to practice hope rather than hate

My mother texted a few weeks ago to ask if I wanted the family Christmas tree skirt. If you are unfamiliar with the term, it's a decorative collar for the base of a Christmas tree.

When Mom retired to southern Australia several years ago, she substantially downsized her belongings, asking the three of us kids to select now what we might otherwise have taken when she dies. My sister asked for some jewelry, my brother some serving ware, and I took the rocker Mom used to sit in when we were infants (with little chew marks on the legs from our old dog). But Christmas decorations were never an option.

So why now? Because when you celebrate Christmas in southern Australia, you are doing so in the summer and it turns out that northern, winter-themed items (including trees) feel a little out of place.

Christianity became a global religion long ago, with its universal truths of love for each other and care for those in need, combined with its spread (often through violence) by the Roman Empire, and then by the empires of England and the United States. And even though the stories, poems and songs preserved in the Bible are quite arid due to their Middle Eastern and North African origins, there are no particular seasons or nations tied to their truths.

But as a northern hemisphere Christian priest, I do appreciate how spring comes here just at the same time as Easter. For me, Easter is the story of an execution, and not a particularly important one at the time — no more significant to the political machine of the day than the executions we continue to commit here. But it is also a story about the inability of any ruling body to kill hope.

I do not preach Jesus as literally and bodily resurrected. I know that for some this is heresy and for others confusing. What's the point of Christianity if Jesus didn't pull off the greatest reversal possible? What power does God have, if not that? A far greater and more intimate power, for me, than if holiness is a being at a distance making use of that power on a selective basis. I don't need God to do magic — that seems too transactional, too much like the

marketplace. What I do need are the words and a community to keep me in touch, heart and soul, with the divine will to be selfless and nurturing and willing (or less resistant) to change. So, for me, the sacred power of Easter is the power of life.

In the depths of winter, warm breezes and crocus buds feel so far away. The snow is heavy and the rain bitterly cold. It is dark early and the limited daylight hours are lost to windowless workplaces. We know intellectually that, with time, all of that will change (and rather early this year), but our bodies and spirits can still feel buried like the seeds and the ground squirrels.

Then it comes! The sun shines and the grass grows and we are all at Ada Hayden, giddy with the freedom from our snow boots! The power of the seasons, the power of life, is awesome. So are the powers of hope, resistance, and relationship.

Maybe Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Mary of Magdala really did see an empty grave. Maybe Thomas really did touch Jesus' resurrected body. But what stirs me, what moves me to have faith (which is trust) in God, is the work of all those who never knew Jesus in human form, yet feel the presence he embodied to this day.

Easter is the irrepressible power of life over forces of death, of new growth out of moldering decay, of love put into action in response to hatred's ever-creative forms of oppression. Easter is a spring story because it names how life always follows death. And Easter is a story without season because there is always some part of our hearts and our community that is lying fallow and in need of some good news to generate growth.

I told my mom that I should get all of the Christmas gear because I'm the only one of her kids in church. Yeah, I played the Jesus card against my siblings. But what I really want from my family of origin and the family my wife and I are making here in Ames and from you, dear reader, is a willingness to look at where we are killing instead of feeding, how we can do hope rather than hate. That holy work transcends all weather.

Easter is the irrepressible power of life over forces of death, of new growth out of moldering decay, of love put into action in response to hatred's ever-creative forms of oppression.



BY RONNA
LAWLESS
Ames Tribune



Shifu Hongyang's path from the church to the Buddhist temple

The venerable Shifu Hongyang has spent several years as an ordained Bhikshuni, a nun in the Chinese Buddhist tradition. But her roots are those of a Lutheran girl growing up in Webster City.

"I was born premature and I have cerebral palsy," Hongyang said. "Because of that, I had trouble with endurance. I had trouble keeping up with other kids. And I grew up in a small town where image really mattered."

Hongyang's spiritual life has always been important to her, even as a child.

"In many ways, I was an unwanted child. I was the second born twin in an unwanted pregnancy. I have three sisters, but I because of my cerebral palsy I grew up alone for the most part," she said.

"I made the choice at the age of 8 to focus on my mind. Thus, my childhood helped and hurt at the same time. It led me to make other choices than I would have otherwise."

Hongyang read everything she could get her hands on.

"It helped me develop my curiosity," she said. "I couldn't control my feet very well, but this contributed to a different way of thinking and believing."

"The monastic life seemed natural to me because I grew up nearly by myself."

"I was drawn to a monastic lifestyle," she said. "I began searching in high school for my spiritual path."

She visited many different churches and learned about

Buddhist, page 15

Women and their faith



Women and their faith

BUDDHIST continued from page 13

different belief systems.

Going to college opened Hongyang's world. She attended services at many local churches, but she was especially drawn to St. Thomas Aquinas.

"The Catholic church impressed me — the way they greet everybody, the way they socialize after church, the pattern of singing, preaching and praying," she said.

Hongyang studied world religions at Iowa State University, where she met her husband. She has a master's degree in religious studies.

During her studies, she ran across a photo of a nun. It was a small photo, but it made a big impact.

"She was wearing a gray robe and hat, and her whole face was a smile — a real smile, a genuine smile," she said.

Hongyang converted to Catholicism during college. Then after marrying a man from China, she converted to Buddhism.

They were married for about a decade and have a daughter together, but divorced about 10 years ago. Even after the end of the marriage, Hongyang continued to pursue the Buddhist faith.

The Buddhist faith puts an emphasis on mindfulness, meditation, wisdom and compassion. It also encourages the renouncement of desire and attachment.

She and her husband moved to Connecticut where she learned more about the Chinese language and culture. She traveled to China several times during those years.

"All of it had a big impact on me," she said.

In the days following the 9/11 attacks, Hongyang went to New York City.

"I wanted to help with the recovery," she said. "It was hard work, meeting with people until 10 p.m. every night. There was much depression and fear. There were many deep emotions, but it helped me build social skills in the Chinese community, and I'm glad for the

experience."

For many years, Hongyang wanted to be a contemplative nun, and she found that role for herself in Chinese Buddhism. In the Chinese Buddhist faith, she is a nun, a Bhikshuni.

She abides by 348 rules that dictate Bhikshuni behavior. She describes the rules as "protective."

"Many of them deal with sex and sexual contact, and with how to properly get along with people," she said.

Hongyang abides by a vegan diet, wears clothing and robes that are permitted for Bhikshuni, and always sleeps on her right side. She shaves her head and

has nine circular burn scars on her scalp, a number she chose herself.

"Shaving my head is a custom; it is not a rule," she said.

Hongyang trained in Taiwan for 30 days to become a Bhikshuni. Her training led to her full ordination as a Chinese Buddhist nun.

"There were 300 women at the training, and some did not make it through," she said. "It was very difficult to stand four to five hours a day."

Hongyang had a temple in Ames for a short time, but could not get the financial support she needed to keep it open. She now devotes the bedroom in her one-bedroom apartment to be a temple, and she has her bedroom set up in her living room.

She devotes much of her time to translating Buddhist text from Chinese to English. Her life-long project is to translate the Mahayana Tripitaka, the three main categories of texts that is the Buddhist canon.

When asked about her thoughts about spring, Hongyang reverted to symbols and rituals learned in her youth.

"The things I like about spring have a lot to do with culture," she said. "I like Easter — Easter eggs, delicious dinner, Cadbury eggs. Easter is symbolic of spring and helps me respect my roots."

"I wanted to help with the recovery. It was hard work, meeting with people until 10 p.m. every night. There was much depression and fear. There were many deep emotions, but it helped me build social skills in the Chinese community, and I'm glad for the experience."

Shifu Hongyang

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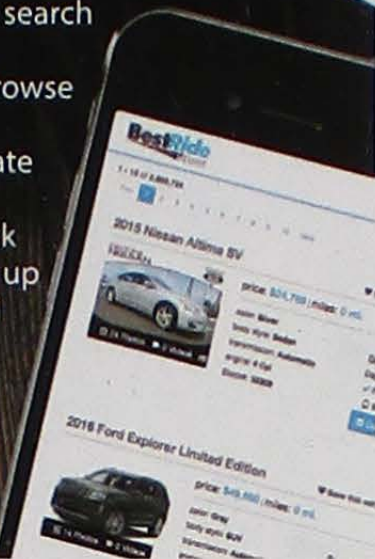
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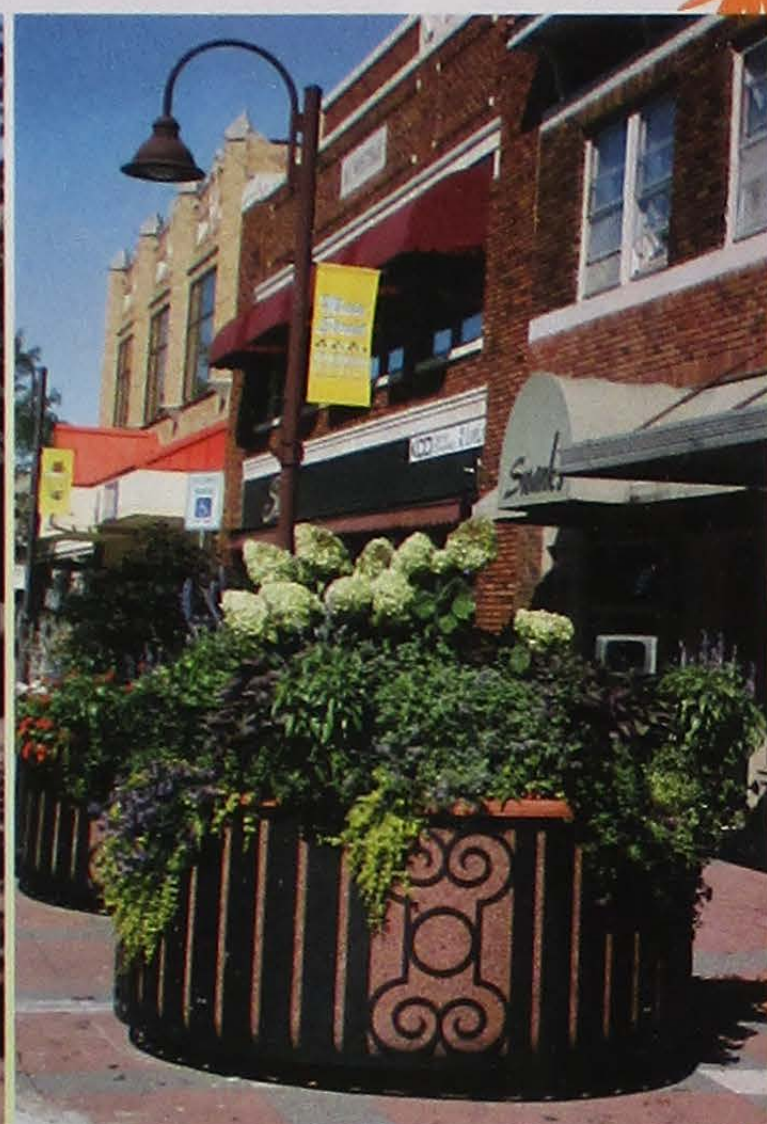
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Hindu spring festivals offer many colors, flavors and symbols



BY RONNA
LAWLESS
Ames Tribune



Neha Mehrota is raising her children to know their Hindu roots, but she is also introducing them to other beliefs.

Each year as spring approaches, Mehrota's family looks forward to Vasant Panchami, a Hindu spring festival.

"The Hindu religion uses a lunar calendar," Mehrota said. "During Vasant Panchami, we worship the goddess Saraswati, the goddess of all forms of learning, especially music and literature."

The spring festival is a form of renewal, Mehrota said.

Mehrota grew up in northern India, in the capital of New Delhi. When she was 20 years old, she came to the United States for graduate school in architecture.

Since then, she has become a U.S. citizen. She is married to Prenav Shrotriya, and they have a son Aneesh and a daughter Anika. Neha is a professor at Iowa State University.

"We just love it here," Mehrota said. "We love the values that people in Ames have. It's a wonderful place to raise our kids."

"In Hinduism, the ancient religious practice is to celebrate the start of spring," Mehrota said. "There is prayer, and we make offerings to the deities — offerings like flowers, milk, food and sweets."

There is also feasting. One of Mehrota's favorites is a yellow sweet called gujia, which is a deep-fried empanada-type pastry filled with nuts and milk powder.

"Yellow is a color closely associated with spring and with spiritual knowledge," Mehrota said.

This is a time to indulge in charity work and to fast in an effort to purify the mind, she said.

Forty days later, Hindus celebrate Holi, which is the Festival of Colors.

"This is the basis for the Color Runs you

Women and their faith



“In Hinduism, the ancient religious practice is to celebrate the start of spring. There is prayer, and we make offerings to the deities — offerings like flowers, milk, food and sweets.”

HINDU continued from page 19

see,” Mehrota said. “We use scented waters and throw powdered colors at each other.”

The color throwing during Holi is a time for all social classes to interact. “All classes throw color at each other,” Mehrota said. “You’ll hear people saying to each other, ‘Don’t be offended. It’s Holi!’”

Holi is a two-day celebration.

“The first night is more austere with a bon fire,” she said. “We roast peanuts and burn our vices.”

The second day is for feasting and for throwing colors.

“The pigments are made from flowers,” Mehrota said. “The purpose of the color is to make people happy.”

Cooking for festivals is an opportunity for women to gather together for fellowship while they work, Mehrota said. “Since ancient times, it has been a way for women to have catharsis and let off steam, but,” she said with a laugh, “it can also be kind of stressful to get all that cooking done.”

One of Mehrota’s favorites during festivals is a drink called kanji, which combines water, mustard seeds, beet root and carrot. “It ferments and helps with digestion,” she said.

Another symbol of spring is the peacock, which signifies rain. “The peacock dances during the rain,” Mehrota said.

Many flowers are significant: chrysanthemums, nasturtiums, sweet Williams, jasmine. A special flower is the harshringar, a white flower with an orange stalk.

“I have fond memories of my mother’s flower garden in India,” Mehrota said. “She loved to plant flowers.”

Mehrota and her family celebrate Holi with the bonfire, feasting and the throwing of colors. “We read mythological tales to the kids,” she said. “We also teach them of how to meditate, which is a ritual opportunity to pause and helps you connect to God.”

“We also celebrate Christmas and Thanksgiving,” Mehrota said. “We even put up a Christmas tree. We are teaching our kids to have open minds and open hearts.”

BY GRAYSON
SCHMIDT
Ames Tribune

LDS spring represents new beginnings

Iowa State Sophomore Morgan Ruiz admits that sometimes it can be challenging being one of roughly 30 Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) on campus. Whether she is having to explain why she spends three hours at church every Sunday, or what exactly LDS believes, she said that she often has to explain the differences between her religion and those of other students on campus.

"Sometimes it is more difficult, just because we have high standards," Ruiz said. "Finding people who also believe those things and understand why we go to church for three hours a week is hard, because that's not a normal thing."

The Dallas, Texas native said she still has people ask her about the Book of Mormon, and what the differences are between that and the Bible, to which she responds by talking about the similarities.

"(The Book of Mormon) is another testament of Jesus Christ," Ruiz said. "We still read the Bible; we still believe the Bible, but it's just another way to view God's love."

However Ruiz said that she has found one other similarity between LDS and various other religions that she has encountered, and that is how the spring season perceived.

"Spring is a time for new beginnings," Ruiz said. "It's like a second New Years...it's kind of like a renewal."

Ruiz said that much like other denominations of Christianity, Easter is the primary focus during spring. However before Easter, Ruiz said that the church hosts one of two General Conferences in early April, which she said is chance for LDS communities all over the world to receive guidance and encouragement from Church leaders. As a Sunday school teacher at the Ames LDS Church, Ruiz said that in

early spring she goes over the names of prophets and apostles so that they are ready to listen during the conference.

"We're encouraged to spiritually prepare ourselves," Ruiz said. "If you have a question or something that has been burdening you, pray about that and ask to receive some sort of answer."

As a full-time engineering student, Ruiz said that spring can often be hectic time, with so much of her life committed to academics and religion. But she said it is her religion that helps her push through the hard times, and gives her that "re-boost" during the spring semester.

"There's that reminder around Easter of what Jesus Christ did for me, and the stuff that I'm going through right now, I can get through it," Ruiz said.

"There's
that reminder
around Easter of what
Jesus Christ did for me,
and the stuff that I'm going
through right now, I can get
through it."

Morgan Ruiz



BY RONNA
LAWLESS
Ames Tribune

For pagans and Wiccans, spring is a time of birth and balance

For modern pagans, the spring equinox is time to celebrate Ostara, a word that comes from the Germanic goddess of spring. The day is also known as Lady Day or Alban Eiler.

The vernal equinox is a time when day and night are in balance, with light on the increase. It's a time of planting seeds, new growth and newborn animals.

For thousands of years, people have seen the planet as a source of life, as Mother Earth, and spring is a large reason for that.

Of course, spring is also the time for the Christian celebration of Easter and the Jewish observance of Passover. There is some overlap with the symbology from these two major religions and the pagans' Ostara.

Ostara is a time of new growth and life, with emphasis placed on plants such as crocuses, daffodils, lilies and other spring flowers. This is the time of year when animals are bringing forth new life too, making common symbols of rabbits, lambs and calves.

Eggs, milk and honey are also commonly represented. Eggs symbolize new life, milk represents the lactating mother animals and honey is a symbol of abundance.

TRADITIONAL FOODS:

Leafy green vegetables, dairy foods, nuts such as pumpkin, sunflower and pine. Flower dishes and sprouts.

HERBS AND FLOWERS:

Daffodil, jonquils, woodruff, violet, gorse, olive, peony, iris, narcissus and all spring flowers.

INCENSE:

Jasmine, rose, strawberry, floral of any type.

COLORS:

Colors for this time of year come from nature itself. The yellows, pinks and lilacs of budding blossoms and the green of new leaves offer the palette of the season.



Ladybugs are symbols of spring for pagans during Ostara. Photo by Audrey from Central Pennsylvania/commons.wikimedia.org

OTHER SYMBOLS OF THE SEASON:

- Seeds and bulbs
- Caterpillars, ladybugs, bumblebees
- Symbols of nature deities, such as Herne, Flora, Gaia and Attis
- Gemstones and crystals such as jasper, aquamarine, rose quartz, and moonstone
- Ritual fires

Some Wiccans observe the spring equinox by dressing in new clothing, lighting bonfires, holding rituals for new beginnings and thanksgiving, and making offerings to the Spring Goddess.

Modern pagans take time to celebrate the new life around them by walking in the park, hiking through a forest or lying in the grass. At this time, they meditate on nature, the change of seasons, and the new plants, flowers and animals all around them.

Women and their faith



Daffodils are among the many spring flowers that symbolize the vernal equinox and Ostara celebration for pagans. *Photo by commons. wikimedia.org*

BY JULIE
ZAUZMER
Washington
Post

A scientist's new theory: Religion was key to humans' social evolution

BOSTON — In humans' mysterious journey to become intelligent, socializing creatures like no other in the animal world, one innovation played an essential role: religion.

That's the theory that a preeminent evolutionary scientist is setting out to prove.

"You need something quite literally to stop everybody from killing everybody else out of just crossness," said Robin Dunbar. "Somehow it's clear that religions, all these doctrinal religions, create the sense that we're all one family."

Dunbar, an evolutionary psychology professor at Oxford University, gained some measure of fame more than 20 years ago for his research on the size of animals' social networks. Each species of primate, he found, can manage to keep up a social bond with a certain number of other members of its own species. That number goes up as primates' brain size increases, from monkeys to apes.

Humans, Dunbar found, are capable of maintaining significantly more social ties than the size of our brains alone could explain. He proved that each human is surprisingly consistent in the number of social ties we can maintain: About five with intimate friends, 50 with good friends, 150 with friends and 1,500 with people we could recognize by name. That discovery came to be known as "Dunbar's number."

And then Dunbar turned to figuring out why Dunbar's number is so high. Did humor help us manage it? Exercise? Storytelling?

That riddle has been Dunbar's quest for years — and religion is the latest hypothesis he's testing in his ongoing attempt to find the answer.

"Most of these things we're looking at, you get in religion in one form or another," he said.

Dunbar is just one of a recent wave of scientists who are interested in how religion came to be and how people have benefited from it. "For most of Western intellectual history since the Enlightenment, religion has been thought of as ignorant and strange and an aberration and something that gets in the way of reason," said Christian Smith, a sociologist at the University of Notre Dame who studies religion. "In the last 10 or 20 years on many fronts, there's been a change in thinking about religion, where a lot of neuroscientists have been saying religion is totally natural. It totally makes sense that we're religious. Religion has served a lot of important functions in developing societies."

In the case of Dunbar and his colleagues, they already published research demonstrating that two other particularly human behaviors increased people's capacity for social bonding. In the lab, they showed that first, laughter, and second, singing, left research subjects more capable of forming connections with other people than they were before.

Religion is the remaining key to explaining humans' remarkable social networks, Dunbar thinks. "These three things are very

good at triggering endorphins, making us feel bonded,” he said last week at the American Association for the Advancement of Science’s annual meeting, where he presented his team’s research on laughter and singing and introduced the forthcoming research on religion.

Religion includes numerous elements of Dunbar’s earlier studies on endorphin-producing activities. Lots of singing, to start. Repetitive motion triggers endorphins, he said, noting that traditions from Catholicism to Islam to Buddhism to Hinduism make use of prayer beads.

Plus, researchers have shown that doing these activities in synchronized fashion with other people drastically magnifies the endorphin-producing effect: Picture the coordinated bowing that is central to Muslim, Jewish and Catholic worship.

And Dunbar’s most recent published research demonstrated the effectiveness of emotional storytelling in bonding groups of strangers who hear the story together — again, a fixture of religious worship.

“What you get from dance and singing on its own is a sense of belonging. It happens very quickly. What happens, I suspect, is that it can trigger very easily trance states,” Dunbar said. He theorizes that these spiritual experiences matter much more than dance and song alone. “Once you’ve triggered that, you’re in, I think, a different ballgame. It ramps up massively. That’s what’s triggered. There’s something there.”

Dunbar’s team will start research on religion in April, and he expects it will take three years. To begin, he wants to map a sort of evolutionary tree of religion, using statistical modeling to try to show when religious traditions evolved and how they morphed into each other.

Of course, religious people themselves might find Dunbar’s theory odd — most don’t think of religion existing to serve an evolutionary purpose, but of their faiths simply being true.

But Smith thinks one can easily have faith in both God’s truth and religion’s role in human development. “From the religious point of view, you can say this ... God created humans as a very particular type of creature, with very particular brains and biology, just so that they would develop into the type of humans who would know God and believe in God,” Smith said. “They’re not in conflict at all.”

He added: “A lot of people assume, falsely, that science and religion are zero-sum games: that if science explains something, then religion must not be true... If you were God and wanted to set up the world in a certain way, wouldn’t you create humans with bigger brains and the ability to imagine?”

One more research finding on the place of God in our brains — remember Dunbar’s number, the five intimate friends and 50 good friends and 150 friends each person can hold onto? Dunbar says that if a person feels he or she has a close relationship with a spiritual figure, like God or the Virgin Mary, then that spiritual personage actually fills up one of those numbered spots, just like a human relationship would. One of your closest friends, scientifically speaking, might be God.

“A lot of people assume, falsely, that science and religion are zero-sum games: that if science explains something, then religion must not be true... If you were God and wanted to set up the world in a certain way, wouldn’t you create humans with bigger brains and the ability to imagine?”

BY ELLIE
KRIEGER
Special to the
Washington
Post



'Dirty' Cauliflower.
Photo by Deb
Lindsey/Washing-
ton Post

Sometimes, it's okay to 'dirty up' your clean eating

I understand why people gravitate toward the term "clean eating." It's an appealing way to describe a dedication to the most healthful, most pure ingredients. But I take issue with it. To me, it implies that foods that don't pass as "clean" (who gets to decide that, anyway?) are somehow soiled, and that you have to choose between the two. Personally, I like a little dirty with my clean, and this recipe is proof that you can have them both simultaneously in a nourishing way.

I've been making one version or another of it for decades, well before "clean eating" entered the lexicon. The accompanying recipe makes an easy, crowd-pleasing side that involves some kind of brassica - broccoli, Brussels sprouts as well as cauliflower - that is simply steamed or roasted until tender and then treated to a contrasting crisp "dirt" of garlicky toasted bread crumbs. The taste of fresh bread crumbs is well worth the small effort of whirring some whole-grain bread in the food processor and baking the crumbs. You can do this alongside the vegetable if you roast it, as called for here, or you can make the bread crumbs up to two weeks ahead and store them in the freezer.

But if you want to skip that step, you

could substitute a half cup of whole-wheat panko bread crumbs. The dried crumbs are toasted further to a deep brown and seasoned in a skillet with garlic, salt, pepper and olive oil, then tossed with the simply cooked vegetable, transforming it from good to luscious. It's just the kind of "dirty" that keeps you wanting to eat smart.

'DIRTY' CAULIFLOWER

6 servings

Here, cauliflower is simply roasted until tender then tossed with a lusciously crisp "dirt" of garlicky browned bread crumbs. The taste of freshly toasted bread crumbs is well worth the small effort it takes to make them, but if you want to skip that step you could substitute a half cup of whole-wheat panko.

MAKE AHEAD: The toasted bread crumbs can be refrigerated for up to 2 weeks.

From nutritionist and cookbook author Ellie Krieger.

Ingredients

- 1 large head cauliflower, cut into 1 1/2 inch florets
- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/4 teaspoon plus 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 1 1/2 slices whole-wheat sandwich bread, crusts removed
- 2 cloves garlic, minced

Freshly ground black pepper

Steps

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees.

Toss the cauliflower with 2 tablespoons of the oil and 1/4 teaspoon of salt in a mixing bowl. Transfer to a 9-by-13-inch baking dish, cover with aluminum foil and roast for 15 minutes, then remove the foil, return it to the oven and roast for 25 to 35 minutes, stirring once or twice, until the cauliflower is tender and browned.

Meanwhile, place the bread in a mini-food processor; pulse until the bread is reduced to crumbs. Spread them on a baking sheet. Bake for about 8 minutes — alongside the cauliflower is fine — tossing once or twice, until crisped and golden brown. Cool on the baking sheet; this will yield about 1/2 cup.

Heat the remaining 2 tablespoons of oil in a medium skillet over medium heat. Once the oil shimmers, stir in the garlic and cook for 20 to 30 seconds, then stir in the toasted bread crumbs and cook for about a minute, until they are well coated, fragrant and further browned. Remove from the heat and stir in the remaining 1/8 teaspoon salt and a few grinds of pepper.

Toss the seasoned bread crumbs with the cauliflower just before serving.

BY BECKY
KRYSTAL
Washington
Post



The everything croissant at Junction Bakery & Bistro in Alexandria, Virginia. Photo by Deb Lindsey/Washington Post

This spice blend is everything. And it's leaving its bagel origins behind

Everything spice: It goes with ... everything.

At least that's what it feels like these days, with the kitchen-sink bagel topping forging its own identity and showing up in other savory and, yes, sweet applications.

"It's funny to see it on so many things now," said Gina Chersevani, the District of Columbia mixologist who owns soda shop and bar Buffalo & Bergen.

Chersevani, who worked at a bagel shop when she was a teenager in Elmont, New York, in the '90s, serves four types of everything bagels at Buffalo & Bergen (regular, wheat, pumpernickel and egg) but has taken to using her mixture of sesame seeds, poppy seeds, onion, garlic and salt elsewhere.

She pulverizes the topping into a powder and combines it with a tomato base for a bloody mary riff called the Lox'd & Loaded - which also happens to be crowned with an over-the-top (literally) garnish of an entire everything-bagel sandwich, complete with lox and cream cheese.

Chersevani sells about 300 or 400 of the drinks on any given Saturday. She also makes her own gravlax and sometimes coats that with everything spice.

Several people — including restaurateur and Mario Batali business partner Joe Bastianich — have laid claim to the creation of the everything bagel in the 1970s or '80s. Regardless of the originator's identity, chef Nathan Hatfield of Alexandria, Virginia's Junction Bakery &

Bistro is a fan of the trademark mix of seasonings, which also can include the more contentious caraway seed.

Hatfield decided to combine his love of everything bagels and croissants. "It came out the way I wanted it to," he said of his everything croissant. He creates the flaky pastry by sprinkling sheets of puff pastry with garlic, onion, poppy, sesame and salt and then cutting strips that are rolled into a spiral. The assertive spices, Hatfield says, go particularly well with the buttery richness of the croissant.

New York's Doughnut Project was similarly inspired. Co-owner Leslie Polizzotto said her partner, Troy Neal, was always eating everything bagels for breakfast. "He had on his list an everything doughnut," she said. "It kind of all clicked."

That's something of an understatement. Last year, after *Gothamist* wrote about the treat, which has sesame, poppy, pumpkin seeds, garlic and sea salt atop a sweet cream cheese glaze, the phone at the fledgling shop was ringing off the hook. "It was insane," Polizzotto said. "We had no idea." The flavor always sells out.

Around Washington, everything spice can also be found in the mashed potatoes at Bryan Voltaggio's Range, a brunch smoked salmon pizza at Michael Schlow's Alta Strada and grilled tuna at Legal Sea Foods.

As Chersevani put it, "Everybody loves everything 'everything.'"

BY SUSAN
SELASKY
Detroit Free
Press

Test Kitchen recipe: Chicken Marbella is impressive and ready in a flash

Plenty of cookbooks, as you can imagine, land on my desk. Some are page turners of mouth-watering recipes that I can't wait to try. Some are just, well, routine. This new book caught my eye for the former reason and because of the author's previous books on a program she co-created.

The "Whole30 Cookbook: 150 Delicious and Totally Compliant Recipes to Help You Succeed with the Whole30 and Beyond" by Melissa Hartwig (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, \$30) came out in December. It has been on New York Times best-sellers list for nine weeks.

What is the Whole30? "Think of the Whole30 like pushing the reset button with your health, your habits and your relationship with food," Hartwig writes.

The Whole30 is a plan that helps you figure out what foods may compromise your health and how you feel without you even knowing it. And by compromise, Hartwig means you have to look at how food triggers things like sugar spikes, mood swings, sleep issues, digestion, cravings and more.

The concept of figuring out what foods ail you isn't new — think gluten-free. This Whole30 plan is a detox of sorts in that you eliminate certain foods from your diet for 30 days and then slowly reintroduce them. Once you reintroduce them, you pay attention to how you feel and any other changes you might notice. Based on those changes, you opt whether or not to include those foods in your diet.

It sounds simple, right?

To get started and follow the plan, the things you'll eliminate for 30 days are alcohol, sugar, dairy, baked goods, and grains and legumes, with the exception of green beans and snow/snap peas. (The last two surprised me, and I'll bet a lot of registered dietitians would disagree.) Instead, you eat meat, seafood, eggs, lots of vegetables and healthy fats. There are other rules, too, including avoiding products that list carrageenan or MSG as an ingredient.

What I like about the book is the



Chicken Marbella and Sautéed Kale. Photo by Susan Selasky/Detroit Free Press/TNS

recipes. Even if you're not going to follow the program, the recipes are not daunting or challenging, use common ingredients and look rather appealing.

CHICKEN MARBELLA AND SAUTEED KALE

Serves: 4 / Preparation time: 15 minutes / Total time: 1 hour

CHICKEN

4 large bone-in and skin on chicken thighs (about 1 1/2 pounds total), trimmed of excess fat

1/4 teaspoon salt

Freshly ground black pepper to taste

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 cup pitted dates, halved

1/2 cup pitted kalamata olives, drained

2 medium shallots, peeled, thinly sliced

1/2 cup chicken bone broth or good quality chicken broth

2 tablespoons red wine vinegar

2 tablespoons capers, rinsed and drained

2 sprigs fresh rosemary

KALE

1 tablespoon olive oil

2 cloves garlic, peeled, thinly sliced

2 bunches kale, tough stems removed, leaves chopped

1/2 cup chicken bone broth or good quality chicken broth

Chopped fresh parsley (optional)

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees.

Pat the chicken skin dry with paper

towel. Season the thighs all over with salt and pepper.

In a large, ovenproof skillet, heat the olive oil over medium-high heat.

Add the chicken, skin side down, and cook until skin is browned, turning once, about 5-8 minutes.

Remove the skillet from heat. Add dates, olives, shallots, broth, vinegar, capers and rosemary and transfer skillet to oven.

Roast, uncovered, until internal temperature of chicken is 165 degrees and meat is no longer pink, 25-30 minutes depending on the size of the thighs.

Meanwhile, saute the kale.

In a large skillet, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the garlic and cook, stirring, until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add the kale (don't worry if it looks like too much in the pan; it will cook down) and broth, and stir to combine. Cover and cook until kale is wilted, about 5-8 minutes.

Cook, stirring frequently, until all liquid has evaporated, 2-3 minutes. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Arrange chicken, olives and dates on top of kale on serving platter.

Drizzle with the pan juices. Sprinkle with parsley if desired and serve.

Adapted from "Whole30 Cookbook: 150 Delicious and Totally Compliant Recipes to Help You Succeed with the Whole30 and Beyond" by Melissa Hartwig (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, \$30).

BY NICOLE
ARNOLD
WRIGHT
Contributing
Writer

5 habits you need to know to improve your METABOLISM

Metabolism is a word we hear often. But do we actually know what it does and how to take care of our own? The human body is truly amazing. Our body can take the food we eat and the beverages we drink and give us energy. Our bodies then use that energy to perform necessary functions such as breathing, blood circulation, food digestion and of course, physically moving our bodies.

Several factors can affect your metabolism such as your age, weight and even gender. However, metabolism is not the main culprit of weight gain or weight loss. The cause of weight gain or weight loss is still the foods and amount of calories we eat and how much physical activity we get. But a healthy metabolism is still important for overall health and achieving a healthy weight. Here are 5 habits you need to know about to start and keep your metabolism in great shape.

SNACKING

Snacking can keep your engine running efficiently all day, if it's done right. Think of your metabolism as a parking meter. Once your time is up, you have to keep "feeding" the meter. Eating smaller portions approximately every 3 hours can help keep your metabolism run its best. Perfect snack ideas consist of a source of protein and fiber and have around 200 or fewer calories.

EXERCISE

The older we get, the more important exercise becomes. As we age, we naturally lose muscle. Exercise is an amazing habit that can not only help you build muscle, but maintain what you have to prevent loss. Strength training and lifting weights are great options to add to your exercise routine. Your muscles will burn more calories than any other part of your body. So, the more muscle you have, the more calories your metabolism will burn, even when you're resting.

AVOID SKIPPING MEALS AND OVER-LIMITING CALORIES

Remember the meter? Your metabolism needs to have calories (energy) throughout the day to keep it running. If you are not giving your body enough calories, your body will adapt to the restricted caloric intake and use fewer calories to perform the same tasks. That will make it more of a challenge to lose weight. Your local Hy-Vee dietitian is your perfect resource to find this balance of how many calories you may need.

EATING ENOUGH PROTEIN TO BUILD MUSCLE

Once you have the exercise habit down, it's just as important to re-fuel and repair the muscles you've been building. Protein is the main nutrient that can achieve this. Again, the more muscle you have, the more calories your metabolism can burn. The best sources of protein come from meat and fish, dairy, nuts and seeds and beans. If you have trouble getting protein from food, try your Hy-Vee dietitian Pick of the Month, Performance Inspired Whey Protein powder, which contains 25 grams per scoop.

DON'T FALL FOR FADS

If a weight-loss promise sounds too good to be true, it is! There is not a magic food that will increase or decrease your metabolism. Make sure you are getting a balanced diet from a variety of foods as well as giving your body the calories (energy) it deserves to keep your meter running the best it can! Try this recipe featured from our Balance magazine for a protein-rich, delicious meal.



Photo courtesy of Hy-Vee

HONEY TURMERIC CHICKEN

Serves 4

All you need:

- 8 wooden skewers*
- 2 tablespoons Hy-Vee honey
- 1 tablespoon Hy-Vee soy sauce
- 2 teaspoons finely chopped fresh garlic
- 1 teaspoon ground turmeric
- Pinch of Hy-Vee salt
- 4 skinless, boneless chicken breasts, cut lengthwise into strips
- 8 ounces green beans, trimmed, thawed if frozen
- 1 sweet potato, peeled and chopped
- 8 ounces cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1 tablespoon Hy-Vee orange marmalade
- 1 tablespoon coconut spread

All you do:

1. Combine honey, soy sauce, garlic, turmeric and salt in a resealable plastic bag. Add chicken breasts; seal bag. Marinate in refrigerator for 1 hour, turning once. Drain chicken; discard marinade. Thread chicken onto skewers.
2. Cook chicken in a grill pan over medium-high heat for 8 minutes or until fully cooked and grill marks form, turning once.

3. COOK green beans in boiling salted water in a large saucepan for 10 or 15 minutes or until tender. Remove beans and keep warm; reserve water. Cook potatoes in reserved water in same saucepan for 8 to 10 minutes or until tender. Drain; return vegetables to saucepan. Toss with tomatoes, orange marmalade and coconut spread.

4. Serve chicken with vegetables.

*Note: Soak wooden skewers in water for 30 minutes before grilling.

Nutrition Facts per serving: 290 calories, 7g fat, 1.5g saturated fat, 750mg sodium, 26g total carbohydrate, 4g fiber, 17g sugar, 31g protein.

Daily Values: 150% vitamin A, 35% vitamin C, 4% calcium, 15% iron.

Source: Hy-Vee Balance

The information is not intended as medical advice. Please consult a medical professional for individual advice. Nicole Wright represents Hy-Vee as a nutrition expert working throughout the community to promote healthy eating and nutrition. Nicole is a Registered and Licensed Dietitian Nutritionist, ACE certified personal trainer and member of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

Good Company presents spring concert “Circle Plus”

Known for lush harmonies and a varied repertoire, the Ames-based women's choral group Good Company will perform on Sunday, May 7, at 7 p.m. at St. Andrews Church in Ames. Tickets are \$12 in advance from Good Company members or \$15 at the door.

The title of the concert, “Circle Plus,” refers to the Venus symbol for women: a circle over a plus sign. The program consists of works by women composers, from pop performers to traditional writers and arrangers. The evening will include music by Carole King and a medley from the Tony Award-nominated musical “Waitress” by Sara Bareilles; it will also feature works by French composer Lili Boulanger as well as Libby Larsen, Joan Szymko and Susan Brumfield.

The group invited women representing the diversity of the Ames community to join them for two pieces on the program. “Choral music is about connection and shared expression,” said Steven Hoifeldt, director of Good Company. “The theme of the concert is strength and beauty — and the sheer joy of spring. This will be an inspiring musical experience everyone can enjoy.”

Good Company — an auditioned group of skilled singers who take time from their professional lives to learn and perform challenging music — is the one of few adult women's choral groups in Iowa. Its programs enable the audience to experience the wide and varied repertoire available for women's choirs. Members are experienced vocalists who enjoy making music in the company of friends. They are excited to share in the beauty of choral music while continuing to learn and grow as individual artists.

Learn more at GoodCompanyEnsemble.org.

Good Company



Good Company spring concert

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WHERE: St Andrews Church in Ames

TIME: 7 p.m.

COST: Tickets are \$12 in advance from Good Company members or \$15 at the door

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